

Squatarola squatarola. — While returning along the beach to Millers to take the train home, I was fortunate enough to take an adult male of this rare migrant, which was in full breeding plumage. All of the above birds were taken at Millers in the afternoon of August 24, 1896.

Rissa tridactyla. — An adult male of this species was taken by Mr. Christopher Wagner, who was shooting from a boat on Lake Michigan near what is known as the Jack-knife Bridge, in Lincoln Park. The bird was purchased for the collection of the Chicago Academy of Sciences by Mr. Chas. M. Higginson.

Clangula islandica. — On December 11, 1896, I obtained two specimens of this bird on Lake Michigan, near the Daily News Sanitarium. I also shot a fine pair of *Harelda hyemalis*, which were the only ones of this species I observed that day. At the present writing, Feb. 3, there are hundreds of the latter species feeding among the ice floes off Lincoln Park.

Uria lomvia. — On December 31, 1896, I obtained a fine adult male of this species, which was shot by a Mr. McCoy, on the Iroquois River, Newton County, Indiana, about one and a half miles from the town of Foresman. — FRANK M. WOODRUFF, *Chicago Academy of Sciences, Chicago, Ill.*

Sundry Notes. — **Clangula americana.** AMERICAN GOLDEN-EYE. — A pair, the first seen this season, were observed in the harbor of Nantucket, Mass., Oct. 26, 1896; one was also seen Nov. 1; both early dates.

Merganser serrator. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER. — October 31 this species was here in greater numbers than usual.

Aythya marila. AMERICAN SCAUP DUCK. — I saw large numbers in Madaket harbor Nov. 1, — about one thousand (estimated) birds.

In passing through Nantucket Sound I saw, Nov. 11, about two thousand Old Squaws (*Harelda hyemalis*) in one body. I also saw a great many White-winged Scoters (*Oidemia deglandi*) in groups scattered over the sound; also a much less number of Surf Scoters (*O. perspicillata*). I did not observe any American Scoters (*O. americana*). I do not see many of the latter nowadays; they are getting to be a rather scarce bird on the Massachusetts and Rhode Island coasts.

Squatarola squatarola. BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER. — Four young birds were seen at Nantucket, Nov. 1; they were well up, flying towards the west. On Nov. 3, I saw one, also a young bird, and an American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*).

Puffinus stricklandi. SOOTY SHEARWATER. — Four were seen in company at Nantucket Sept. 3, 1896, as they passed by the south side of the island, flying towards the west.

Zenaidura macroura. MOURNING DOVE. — Two seen and shot one, the male, the stomach of which was forwarded to Mr. S. D. Judd, Washington, for identification of its contents, the result of which has been kindly sent

me by Dr. C. Hart Merriam, Chief of the Biological Survey, from whose letter I quote: "The bulk of the contents is grass seed (over two hundred seeds of one kind, *Panicum*, and a dozen of another, *Paspalum*). There was also a blackberry seed, a ragweed seed, and four quartz pebbles."

Dendroica vigorsi. PINE WARBLER.—While at the middle eastern portion of the island I saw, hopping about some bushes and fence rails, a lone Pine Warbler which I shot. It proved to be a young female in the first plumage.

Bartramia longicauda. BARTRAMIAN SANDPIPER.—A nest containing three eggs was found at Tuckernuck Island, June 22, 1896. It was located on the ground in a small bunch of grass, and was well concealed. The bird flew off the nest. I am told that the young leave the nest as soon as they are able to run.

Merganser serrator. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER.—One of my old shooting companions informed me that he saw thirteen Red-breasted Mergansers, in a flock at West Hampton, Great South Bay, Long Island, N. Y., July 29, 1891. They were in moult and could not fly. I think it probable they were birds that had been too badly wounded early in the season to migrate.—GEORGE H. MACKAY, *Nantucket, Mass.*

The most General Fault of the A. O. U. Check-List.—This is a serious matter which I have hitherto refrained from bringing up, partly on account of its hopelessness, in the present arrangement and numbering of the species, partly because it is to some extent a question of ornithological expertness regarding which opinions may reasonably differ. But now, having occasion to retrace the whole ground of North American ornithology, in the preparation of the Fifth Edition of my 'Key,' the blemish I shall point out obtrudes itself continually upon my attention; I cannot longer maintain the reticence I have hitherto preserved without seeming to condone the impropriety by tacit acquiescence; and I desire to put myself upon record in the matter, lest my silence be imputed to unrighteousness. This is the first general protest I make public on certain subjects concerning which I was often found in a more or less respectable minority of two or one, when various questions were put to vote for the official decision of the Committee over which I had for many years the honor to preside.

When we decided to embody the expression of our classificatory and nomenclatural wisdom in the concrete form of a Check-List, the question of the most eligible linear sequence of species, genera, and higher groups of course came up at the outset. All lists of our birds had before proceeded in time-honored fashion from the higher to the lower groups; and this high to low method had been invariably intended and implied, whether the Raptores or the Passeres were in fact considered highest. We proposed to reverse this order, and go from low to high—in other words, to turn such previous lists as those of Baird, Coues, or Ridgway "hind part before"; which proposition was carried into effect. I favored